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## THE PROBLEM OF THE LABOUR LEADER.

Working class organisations have always (but especially during and since the war) suffered from acts of treachery committed by leaders in whom confidence had mistakenly been placed. Hardly a strike or lock-out of considerable size occurs but there is some Trade Union official who, from sincere or other motives, deserts, or counsels action useful only to the other side. Each of these defections raises a little storm of protest and much vowing of "never again" among the active rank and filers; but the storm dies away, the incident is soon forgotten, and "Black Friday" of 1921 is followed as a matter of course by the engineers' "betrayal" of 1922. On such occasions some band of enthusiasts with its own pet theoretical obsession is sure to offer its explanations and warnings, confident that the workers will this time learn by experience, and that the mistake really will be the last.

If the leader is a "politician," then the anti-political syndicalists will preach about the demoralising influence of the House of Commons, the futility of the ballot, and the necessity for pure and simple unionism of some brand or another. If he is the official of a Trade Union, then reformist political bodies of all shades will point to the narrow, conservative, unidealistic tendencies of union officialdom, and disappointed seekers after his and other jobs will run campaigns to "sack the lot," and perhaps try to stir up the desired amount of feeling by urging that it is the excessive salaries paid which cause indifference to the interests of the under dog—the member.

If the leader still has the ear of his members, he remains where he is, and the thing dies a natural death. If he falls, a grateful capitalist Government may make a niche for him in some obscure department where no harm can be done by his probable incompetency. His successful rival will then take his place, on making all the old unfaithfully attractive but never to be fulfilled promises, until he, too, makes way for a new idol; just like the usual ins and outs of national politics.

Of course, new times bring new types, and the Victorian "ploughboy who has fought his way upwards" à la Samuel Smiles gives way to the product of some Labour College or to the University-trained son of one of the old successfals; but the result is the same. The loving shepherds continue to lead, and the sheep to follow, to the slaughter prepared by the butchers of the ruling class.

What is to be done about it? The matter is an important one, and it is worth while examining some of the proposals made by would-be guides of the workers.

A good instance of the kind of argument used against back-sliding union officials is contained in a resolution of the Distributive Group of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, reproduced in *The Communist* (10th June, 1922). It urges among other things, that "the salaries paid to whole-time officials should be made to approximate to the average wage or salary obtaining in the industry in which the officials is engaged."

At first glance, this sounds both reasonable and very much to be desired, but is, in fact, quite impracticable. It is the product

not of thought, but of the feeling of resentment against the individuals supposed to be the cause of failure. Because there does not appear to be any justification for the official in a comparatively secure position receiving many times as much as his members, these enthusiasts suggest equalising the two rates of pay as a remedy. They forget to ask themselves whether it will work; they overlook the fact that they live in a capitalist world.

The question of reasonableness is relatively a minor one, and can soon be disposed of. If it is unreasonable that J. H. Thomas should get £1,000 per annum and his members only £150 or thereabouts, is it any more reasonable that a general secretary of a labourers' union with membership running into hundreds of thousands should get about 40s. per week, while an official of an organisation of bank employees, for instance, with less arduous work and less responsibility, gets £500 a year or more? The argument is unsound.

Realising that this is the position, one must give up Utopian notions about equal pay, and look elsewhere for a solution of the problem which confronts us. We need not, of course, accept Clynes's argument in favour of still higher pay, which is that the higher the status of the workers' representatives the more attention conceded to them by the other side. Mr. Clynes knows well enough that other factors determine the amount of consideration an organisation will get from its opponents; will decide, in fact, whether negotiations shall take place at all. When the devil of necessity compels, the robber aristocracy of allied capital does not refuse the "bloody hand" of the saddler President of Germany or of the Bolsheviks.

Another suggestion to the same end was that "every official should be equipped with a thorough knowledge of Economics and Industrial History from the working class standpoint." It would obviously be to the good that the servants of the workers should be competent servants, but if the intended servants are really aiming at being masters, the greater their knowledge the greater their danger. Surely the ambitions of many of the young bloods of the Labour movement, coming barrister Hodges and the products of Fabian training, for instance, are illustrations enough of this.

Where these qualifications already exist the same difficulties are present also. Even the officials of the Communist Party "want

watching." John Clarke, in *The Worker* (organ of the R.I.L.U., 10th June, 1922) writes of the possible danger of the "mass" party (C.P.G.B.) becoming merely a means of collecting "flats" for "the 'communist' amateur Horatio to play with and prey upon."

More than competency is required.

Then there is the talk about demoralising environment, especially of the House of Commons. This is all nonsense. The House of Commons' smoking-room, or wherever it is the Labour M.P.s get drunk, is from a political point of view no more demoralising than the average Labour Party or Trade Union branch or the 1917 Club, where Labour's Hampstead "Highbrows" congregate.

It is based on the assumption that these men rise to eminence because they are revolutionary, and that once arrived their revolutionary outlook gets blurred. The assumption is not correct. Whether or not a few, or all of them, at some time accepted the revolutionary position, they rise because they are smooth-tongued and popular; because they give attractive expression to the momentary discontent of their fellows; because they are quick to note and adapt themselves to coming changes of sentiment, thus gaining a reputation for leadership. It may often be that the successful man is a "rebel," who gains popularity from the prevailing dissatisfaction by the vigour of his abuse of the capitalist, or of the reactionary officials; but apart from the fact that one does not become a revolutionary by composing hymns of hate about the F.B.I., it is obvious that if the workers who originally elected Mr. Clynes to the House of Commons did so because he was a revolutionary, they would not tolerate him when he ceased to be one.

Only a Socialist electorate would support a candidate who fought on a straight Socialist programme, and only a convinced revolutionary membership would have a revolutionary policy and revolutionary officials. This is at the bottom of the business, and it is of no use complaining about the man. What, after all, is the position of the Labour M.P.?

He is elected with the indispensable financial and organisational backing of a Trade Union or the Labour Party, on that nebulous thing—the Labour Party's programme. That is to say, he receives the votes of

people who variously think that "Mr. Shortt must go" for not saving Jacoby from hanging and thus condemning him to the worse horror of life-long imprisonment; that Winston Churchill is a blackguard; that the cattle embargo should be raised; that the beer tax should be removed; that prohibition is (or is not) desirable; that interest on Government Loans should (or should not) be reduced; that this country ought to disarm, or ought alternatively to arm more to make work at Woolwich Arsenal, etc., etc. He receives the votes of a number of shades of anti-Liberal and anti-Coalitionist but decidedly anti-Socialist electors. He gets his £400, with probably some other pay from a Union and almost certainly quite considerable extras in the shape of expenses from various sources. He has no doubt a better and more comfortable existence than previously, and naturally he doesn't relish a return to the insecurity of the mine or the factory. How, then, can he best achieve security? By exposing the rottenness of Labour representation and the futility of Parliamentary bargaining? By offending the powers that be who can offer honours and other more lucrative posts? Not much!

He knows he cannot fight an election on his own, and he knows he must please his electorate and the Labour Party, which can only be done by pretending to fight for the futile reforms on which he was elected, and by supporting new stunts as they become popular. If he doesn't, what happens? Where would Clynes be at the next election if he seriously opposed and exposed the capitalist system? What will happen to Col. Malone, elected as Coalition Liberal, and now in the Communist Party? (Not that I accuse him of seriously opposing capitalism.)

Labour M.P.s and T.U. officials play for safety, and the mentality of the average worker being what it is, this means playing the capitalist game.

This, of course, runs counter to the Communist notion of leadership. I should have said *notions*, because there are two. One is that the workers are really advanced, and willing to fight, but are held back by their timid or treacherous leaders; and the other is that the workers as a whole don't, and won't ever, understand their own interests, but that a choice band of gallant Communists will wrest control from the present leaders and inaugurate the revolution in a

moment of crisis. These words about the moment of crisis serve the same purpose as the indefiniteness of Old Moore's prophecies—they save the prophets from being called to account. Whenever they promise but fail to produce the revolution, they can point out that the crisis wasn't critical enough. That, however, is by the way.

The first I really can't take seriously. The idea of several hundred thousand revolutionary railwaymen, for instance, held in check by J. H. Thomas, only makes me laugh. In the other Communist theory of leadership of the masses we get one of the basic fallacies at the back of the failure of the Labour Movement. Even if it were true that masses of people can be induced to take important action vitally affecting themselves and lasting over a considerable period, merely because they trust certain elected or self-appointed leaders, it still remains to be shown how the Labour Party or the Communists could hope to compete with the older parties, possessing as these do unlimited wealth, long experience, and control of Press and pulpit. Actually, people require sooner or later evidence to convince them that the action they are asked to take is sound for them, although, of course, they may, and often do, for a long while misinterpret the evidence. The extreme foolishness of this case is illustrated by a writer in the *Workers' Republic* (Communist Party of Ireland, 3rd June, 1922), who, assuming the possibility of a Socialist revolution in Ireland sometime between the Armistice and now, explains its failure to materialise by the detention of Jim Larkin in America! The idea of a great social movement affecting every detail of the lives of the great majority of the members of society waiting the arrival of one man is absurd, and the situation is made more ironical when we realise that his imprisonment depends on the whim of the Capitalist Government of the United States. The picture of "Saint" James Larkin, Saviour of Ireland, is amusing but no more accurate than that of Lloyd George, winner of the war, or Horatio Bottomley, Empire builder and martyr. Socialism cannot be achieved by leaders. As Trotsky wrote to an American critic, Louis Boudin: "Remember, we are not making the revolution; the revolution is making us."

As happened in Australia recently, a Labour Government in power could not get even the support of its own employees by

promising to resist wage reduction for them and other workers, because of the effectiveness of capitalist Press propaganda in favour of the theory that high wages prevent trade revival. (*Melbourne Socialist*, 17-2-1922.)

The obstacles presented by the untrustworthiness of leaders arises from the composition of the rank and file. No organisation, industrial or political, can be effective except the members are convinced of the correctness of their aims and the necessity for the policy their organisation has adopted. Only if the members have knowledge can they be immune from betrayal at the hands of self-seeking and unscrupulous leaders.

A further clause in the resolution quoted at the beginning of the article which demands "an enlightened and educated membership" is really, therefore, the one which strikes at the root of the evil. When, by the giving of direct or indirect bribes, the capitalist can secure the co-operation of a Henderson, it is not his brains or ability they want. They were buying his power to dragoon his followers. As Sydney Webb says of the Government positions granted to Labour leaders during the war: "These officials were elected in the main, not on personal grounds, but because they represented the Trade Union Movement." ("History of Trade Unions," page 637.) They were the shepherds with fleeces to sell.

When anti-Socialist organisations make such use of Mrs. Snowden's remark that Socialism is "no solution for the unemployed problem" (*Daily Herald*, 31st January, 1922), it is her influence and her reputation which makes the incident harmful. Workers understanding Socialism would not be misled by Henderson, and would never have put Mrs. Snowden in a position of eminence, and their defection, if it took place, would harm no one except those who paid and made a bad bargain.

Class conscious workers would elect M.P.s on a Socialist programme and with a Socialist electorate behind him the man could, and would have to, work for Socialism. If he went over to the ruling class he would lose his seat. The strength of Parliamentary representation is in the knowledge and determination of the electors.

There is one Labour candidate who recognises this, and in so doing makes the most

effective charge against the Labour Party. Fred Henderson, in his "Labour's Case," says: "If the Labour Party is not returned to power with the full strength of a public mandate for the constructive work of bringing in the co-operative Commonwealth, it had better not be returned at all . . . a Labour Government placed in power by any merely reformist impulse of the electors of the country, and therefore without any real power or authority for anything beyond social reformist purposes, would be in a position of hopeless impotence." (Page 19.)

Only those organisations can effectively wage war on capitalism which are composed of members who recognise the class struggle is fundamental; who realise that Socialism is the only hope of the workers, and who know the lines of their struggle, and the result to be achieved by their activities.

H.

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### WHAT D'YE LACK.

It was the cry of the 'prentice of three and four hundred years ago, selling his master's wares from the shop doorway. I am reminded of it when I pass you, fellow worker, mornings and evenings. In my thoughts I echo the question, and answer it in your name. What do you lack?

Food, plentiful and pure; yet it is you who grow, carry and prepare the delicate meal for the rich man's table. Clothing, adequate and beautiful: though by your toil your master's person is protected and adorned. A dwelling fair and well provided: yet your hands raise palaces and fill them with comfort. Leisure you have not, though your service makes other lives one holiday. Nor travel, though you build planes and ships. Nor peace for your mind to roam and your limbs to rest.

All these you lack, without knowing that you do. Your life wants breadth and depth and height, and you hardly dream that it might be different. Toil is your heritage, you think, and all else your master's.

You are a funny fellow, worker. You take a man and feed him choicely, dress him with splendour, build him a temple, surround him with perfumes and music—and then fall down before him! When he is established above you, complete, you forget that you *made* the golden image. Subtract all the attributes and ornaments with which you furnished him, and what remains but a shivering and hungry man? I hear you called rapacious, self-seeking; and I see you more generous than Saint Martin, bestowing your whole cloak on the beggar, and content to receive a tattered remnant back again.

Martin Nexö wrote a tale of a Danish workman, Pelle. Did you ever read what he said of us all when he looked at his new-born son? Men, he said, are born naked; the beasts are born clothed. That is because mankind has come to the point where it can provide clothes for itself. Pelle's wife thought Nature might well neglect the rich, but remembering how workers suffer in the bitter weather, she wondered that their children should still come unclothed into the world. For the best of reasons, Pelle thought. It is no longer Nature's business. She has given man the powers; it is for him fitly to employ them. Therefore the cobbler's son, just as the prince, arrives without a wardrobe: "as if," Pelle said,

"Nature were forever holding up to us the stamp of our nobility."

And there he was right. Having learned to produce all things for human sustenance and delight, we have now to see that who produces enjoys. To be robbed is not noble. To be a slave is not noble. The next step, comrade in labour, is clear: and it is we who must take it. The earth, and all means which we have produced for drawing wealth from it, must be ours in common. Why that, you say, is revolution! So it is. Man's advance from the tribal communes has been a succession of revolutions; and each one, by fulfilling the aspirations of a single class, brings mankind farther on its upward way. All classes but ours have won to freedom. the Socialist revolution will be our own. Thereafter, to live one must perform one's share of social effort, and shall lack nothing that human wit can devise and labour produce. N.

### "SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE OF."

*Is Trade Unionism Sound?*

By J. H. Bunting. Published by Benn Bros. 2s. 6d.

Sir Peter Ryland, who writes one of the prefaces to this book, J. R. Clynes being its other sponsor, is Past-President of the Federation of British Industries. He is also Chairman of Ryland Bros., Ltd., Vice-Chairman of Pearson, Knowles Coal and Iron Co., Ltd., and director of several companies including the London and Lancashire Fire Insurance Co.; Ltd., Moss Hall Coal Co., Ltd., Partington Steel and Iron Co., Ltd; quite a captain of industry, in fact, eking out a meagre existence on what our author calls "wages of superintendence." When therefore he closes his blessing on the book with the remark that "some of Mr. Bunting's premises may require further examination before they are completely acceptable," I suspect him of cynicism. Sir Peter must know enough about industry, even if he is a director, to be aware that the less they are examined the more liable are Mr. Bunting's premises to be accepted as the truth: Examination damns the book from first page to last as a mass of economic untruths, confusions, and contradictions. In style and matter it resembles those "Pay-day talks" which nowadays bulk larger and larger in pay envelopes.

It extends to about 100 pages, each one more puerile than the last.

Before dealing with a few of the points it raises there is one small criticism I have to make. The book is entitled "Is Trade Unionism Sound?" Now in a book with this title the reader expects to find something about trade unionism. He expects to have the author's definition of the term set before him, with a survey of trade unionism in the past, and lessons to be drawn from that survey. All this the reader expects reasonably enough, and yet nowhere in this book, save on the flyleaf, do the actual words "trade unionism" occur. Without counting I cannot say how often the phrase "trade union" is used, but certainly not half a dozen times. The author ignores the subject he is supposed to be writing on. He leaves it without apology or excuse and plunges at once into his world of dreams, to preach of brotherhood and good feeling between employers and employees. But let us turn to the material Mr. Bunting offers. From so much that is false it is difficult to choose items for comment. And to show briefly what in Mr. Bunting's opinion is wrong with the world is equally difficult, for he does not definitely tell us. The one thing that certainly is not wrong with it in his opinion is capitalism. As well as I am able to make out Mr. Bunting's case it is this:—

"The total production of industry is the gross production of the workers who out of it have to pay (1) so much for the use of capital; (2) so much for the use of land; (3) so much for the employers' services." (Page 25.) The balance they keep for themselves. This constitutes their wages fund. Now "if the amount of production could be increased, prices would be reduced accordingly, more capital could be conserved, and it would follow that it would be at the disposal of the workers at a lower rate. This would mean that capitalists would receive a smaller proportion of the total production, leaving a larger proportion of the increased production to be shared between the workers." (Page 35.) And how to increase production? Why work for whatever wage an employer will offer? Don't insist on 70s. when only 66s. is tendered. Take 66s., and then you create a demand for 66s. worth of commodities, and thus for workers to produce them, and these workers in their turn create fresh demand for labour and so "ad infinitum." Everyone is

employed, prices fall, real wages rise, the workers continue to pay less and less for the use of capital, until finally "they enjoy its use practically free of charge." (Pages 18 and 29.) What a lovely dream! Only unfortunately it is only a dream, and does not stand examination, Sir Peter!

Even the dreamer himself seems to have doubts about the efficacy of his scheme, for he shows us how it would work if applied on Mars, where, for illustration, he assumes "conditions to be very similar to those which prevail here." Yes; they may be "very similar," but they are not the same, and because of that the scheme will fail here. Even judged by Mr. Bunting's own premises it can be shown to be impossible and illogical.

If the demand for commodities increases to such an enormous extent, why should their prices fall rather than rise, and why should the price of capital (i.e., interest) fall with an increased demand?

But, of course, our author is wrong in his fundamentals. Workers do not "employ capital." The owners of capital employ them. To-day the working class possesses nothing but its power to labour, which, in order to live, it sells to the capitalist class, the owners of the machinery, the raw material—in short, all the means of production. And the capitalist is willing to buy labour power because it brings forth surplus value, because it produces more than is necessary for the workers' subsistence, because he can appropriate to himself this surplus. When a surplus cannot be obtained production ceases, unemployment ensues. The profits of capital, while undoubtedly produced by the workers, are not paid by them to the capitalists for the use of their capital, but are extorted out of them by the present system of legalised robbery.

Until he realises this, our author will continue to contradict himself and argue in circles. And when he does realise it, he will not be so hazy concerning wages, prices, and profits.

Another statement given without the sorely needed proof is the old one that high wages result in high prices. If it is possible for a producer to raise prices at will, if prices are fixed quite arbitrarily, why is any strike ever contested? Why do employers organise to prevent wage increases? It would be cheaper and easier to pay any wage demanded and raise the price of the product. Capitalists

and workers alike are subject to the economic forces which, not individual wishes, determine the prices at which commodities sell. To recount all the other fallacies and sentimentalities contained in the book would take too long, and serve little useful purpose. When an author says that half the reward of a miner "is the vision of the comfort that is being brought to the homes of the people, the power that is being supplied for the production of wealth"; and that capitalists "if they choose to retire from the commercial arena, could obtain sufficient income from their capital without entrenching on their capital or employing labour for commercial purposes" (Marx in "Capital" has already asked: If all capitalists were to do this, where would they find their commodities in the market?)—to quote but two passages typical of many, he is not worthy of serious attention.

But books like these which, whilst ostensibly stating new truths are in reality only propounding new ways of defending capitalism, are becoming more and more common as the rottenness of the present system of production obtrudes itself more on its victims, and unless such attempts are recognised for what they are, still more enquiring workers will be gulled into meek acceptance of their present misery. Knowledge of their position in society will, however, give the workers the power to resist the influence of these pipings, and that knowledge can only be obtained by the reading of Socialist literature and a grasp of the Socialist position.

W. J. R.

### THE PIERIAN SPRING.

Addressing an Educational Society meeting in London at the end of March, Lord Haldane, as reported by *The Scotsman*, said that "he did not think we would get a fully intelligent nation and, as a consequence, a fully intelligent Government, until we got the influence of the University student permeating the whole nation. The Universities were to-day rising to a new function. . . . A great change had come over the people. . . . The working classes were becoming keen about the higher knowledge. They thought nothing too difficult to learn, from Einstein downwards." (Downwards to J. S. Nicholson, we presume.) "He saw in the future a class of University

student who would find a career in the missionary effort of going into the industrial centres, and preaching the higher knowledge to the workers. It would be a new kind of work, akin to that of the clergy, but would be pursued from the standpoint of the University."

We like this vision of Lord Haldane's. We like it immensely. We thrill to the thought of the young venturer answering the call: "Come over into Manchester and help us!" We follow him in spirit into the wilds of Barrow and Luton, clad in the decorum of Eights' Week as in a garment, and luminous with Higher Knowledge. Wondrous gospel and full of promise!

What constitutes Higher Knowledge? We do not know. But be sure it embraces whatever concerns the upward march of man. Its apostle will first make known to the workers that there is no longer any reason why they should be starved either of learning or of bread. That without their toil there would be neither for any man. That the whole history of human kind from the first slaves till now is the story of the many, ignorant and meanly provided, serving in different ways the few, privileged to wealth and culture. That they are the last to win their freedom, and when they resolve to produce for themselves, instead of their masters, neither physical or intellectual hunger will go unsatisfied.

Oh, be sure the Higher Knowledge must begin with this—the setting of the workers' feet upon the road to universal culture, the Pierian spring at which all may drink and rejoice—well, perhaps not quite that. "With an educated democracy, such as he had in view, the workers would not only earn better wages, but there would be fewer strikes and lock-outs and disturbances, and the productivity of the nation would increase as the result of its system of higher education."

So the highest blessings of the Higher Knowledge is, after all, only to make more efficient wage-slaves. No, on second thoughts, there will be no reason to abandon socialist teaching even if Lord Haldane's dream shall come true. There will still be need of knowledge, simple and unexalted—knowledge with a small k. A.

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**THE COMMUNISTS AND IRELAND.**

On the front page of "The Communist" (8-7-22) there appears an article entitled "Our Duty to Ireland" that calls for some comment on our part on account of the nonsense contained in it.

The main struggle in Ireland is not, and never has been, a struggle of wage workers against masters. Here and there in the history of Ireland there have been minor struggles on the part of the work-ers, but the greater part of the stage has always been occupied by the national struggle for freedom of enterprise on the part of the various groups that might benefit by greater freedom to exploit Irish Industry. As Ireland exists principally by agriculture the small farmers or peasants have figured largely in the strife. The fact that the poverty-stricken peasants have borne the bulk of the burden of struggle is no evidence that they will obtain any benefit, whatever be the outcome.

This struggle in Ireland has been going on for centuries, and bitterly indeed have the peasantry suffered by the coercive actions of the foreign land-owning class, who were backed up by the different English Governments.

Irish industry is backward partly on account of the lack of certain economic resources such as coal and iron, partly because it suited Irish landlords and English

capitalists to keep Ireland in the main an agricultural country.

Though the capitalistic development of Ireland has been slow, yet considerable progress has been made in that direction. The wage labouring class has relatively increased and the farmers have come more and more under the control of large industry. The farmers are, in the main, in the hands of the agents of the large exporters—egg buyers, cattle buyers, corn buyers, creameries and so on. The European war made the farmers temporarily well-to-do, and they poured money into the Sein Fein movement in the belief that the latter movement would conserve their prosperity. Peace, however, is bringing them back to the position of paid growers and distributors of agricultural produce.

An Irish Sein Fein Republic will not solve the difficulties of the wage labourers and farmers—it will, in fact, intensify their misery. They will then be under the control of the same people who control affairs now—Irish buyers—Irish Capitalists—without being able to salve their wounds by blaming all their troubles upon the English oppressor.

The way out of the difficulties facing the Irish town and country worker is the same as the way their fellow workers have to follow, no matter what country they chance to exist in. That way is to join with their fellow workers the world over in the struggle to put an end to Capitalism by introducing Socialism. Anything short of this will only bring in its train bitter disillusion. They who tell the Irish workers to organise for anything less than this are their enemies.

Such in brief is the general position. The article mentioned in our opening remarks advises the present minority in Ireland to fight on, and the reason they advance for backing the minority is contained in the following extract:

"De Valera never was, never can be, a leader of the workers. Nevertheless, most of the revolutionary workers are with O'Connor and him.

"They are with them for the same reason that we, if we had to make the choice, would be behind De Valera and O'Connor—because they are fighting the British Empire. (Italics theirs.)

"That reason—no other."

The Communists, therefore, support the minority in Ireland "because they are fighting the British Empire—that reason—no other." What a brilliant attitude for

a self-styled working class party to take up. If they follow this policy out logically (nor that we wish to be accused of suggesting that the Communist can follow anything out logically) then on the same ground they would have been bound to support the Central Powers in the European War, incidentally supporting the oppressors of foreign working men, and the useless slaughter of working men generally. In other words they tie themselves to a policy of supporting the murderous conduct of different groups of foreign capitalists "because they are fighting the British Empire!" A delightful position indeed—but a fitting position for sensational gasbags.

The above is not all—the article concludes as follows:

"Workers of Britain, show these politicians they are wrong.

"You have no cause for quarrel with your oppressed comrades in Ireland. You never had. Whether the present armed conditions in Ireland are prolonged or no."

"Stop making munitions for Ireland! Stop sending munitions to Ireland! Demand the withdrawal of British troops! Do for the Irish what you did for the Russians!" (Italics theirs.)

This is really the most absurd part of all—if one can define one piece of nonsense as more absurd than another. Not many months ago they themselves made the following enlightening observation on "what you did for the Russians."

"Frankly, the National Council of Action has failed, and its failure is all the more disappointing when one remembers the unanimity and enthusiasm of the great Central Hall Conference held at the beginning of August last. It was formed to prevent the supplies and munitions being sent in support of the attack on Soviet Russia, which it is quite obviously not doing. Somehow, and from somewhere in this country, those supplies are being sent.

"A Moscow report alleges that England 'has sent seven steamers of munitions, three tanks, and twelve small steamers with provisions in aid of Poland, and that these have been unloaded at Danzig. German reports refer to foreign vessels passing through the Kiel Canal, presumably to the same direction.'" (*The Communist*, 7/10/20.)

This is "what you did for the Russians." What blind rhetorical balderdash!

"What you did for the Russians" then was to fail completely to prevent munitions being sent to assist those fighting against Russia. The Communists wish the same policy to be carried out again. Funny, isn't it?

Taking the superficial facts of the situation in Ireland as it is at present concerning

the attitude of the minority, the position is as follows:

The Irish people have voted in favour of the Free State idea by an overwhelming majority. This is the fact that cannot be swept aside by sensational remarks. Consequently, whatever the minority may think of the Free State position, the only sensible course for them to follow is to accept the position the vote of the people has forced upon them for the present, but work to alter the mental outlook of the majority so that future elections will see the Free State position supplanted by the one the present minority favour. To endeavour to alter the views of the mass of the population by battering their heads is a nonsensical attitude to take up. Besides, has not the common cry of Ireland for years been that the majority of the Irish people were being coerced to suit the ideas of a minority?

Whether or not the English Government has bought over the Collins group does not hide the fact that the majority of the Irish population agree to the position Collins has taken up. This should sign "finis" to the matter for the present without further useless throwing away of lives.

It may appear very heroic to fight a losing battle to the end; martyrdom is always a very questionable attitude, though it may be spectacular. In the present circumstances, where it involves the lives of numbers of Irish working people who do not yet understand their social position, it is criminal folly.

Finally, as mentioned above, whatever the immediate outcome of the struggle may be, one thing is certain; it will still leave the Irish workers wage labourers—and that is the essence of the matter for us.

## **ATTENTION!**

Will those interested in the work of the Edinburgh Branch of the Party communicate with:—

**ANDREW PORTER,**  
12a, Kings Road,  
Portobello.

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**RUSSIAN PROBLEMS.**

Dear Sirs,

In reply to Mr. Dight, you mention the fact that the case of America is an example of Capitalist Development by transplanted material. I think that Marx has pointed out that the machinery of Capitalist Production must be used for producing under another state. We know that the Russians have been bargaining for more machinery. Assuming that they are successful, don't you think that we should witness the development of a Proletarian State by transplanted means? I do not think that Marx expected everyone to be capable of fully understanding the anomalies of Capitalism before a revolution occurred.

He states in the preface to the Critique: "With the change of the economic foundation, the entire super-structure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations, the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, æsthetic or philosophic, in short, the ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out."

This passage seems to show that Marx foresaw a change from one system to another without the people being educated up to, say, the S. P. G. B. standard. I should like to see your interpretation of it. In other parts of your reply you are inclined to exaggerate. For instance, "As the upheaval in Russia in 1917 scarcely raised a ripple among the workers of the West, and certainly not the faintest suggestion of a revolution." Does the writer remember a person named Liebnicht? Then there is the case of Hungary, Finland, Persia, also, I do not think that the Russians expected to turn the peasant into a Marxist in a single night (although that job with the Bolsheviks in Political Power is far easier than the S. P. G. B. job with the Capitalist holding political power). The people I have met and talked with on their return from Russia have said that the peasant supported the Bolshevik because he gave him land and peace. Then again, if there has been no social change in Russia, would the writer tell me why the capitalist powers of the world have been busy subsidising wars against the Soviet Republic?

Surely if they are going on the same routine as Capitalist Society there is no need to attack them.

Yours fraternally,  
D. S. O'MAHONEY.

**REPLY TO D. S. MAHONEY.**

Our correspondent misses the point of our first reply to H. Dight. In America we have the example of a *new* people, with new higher developed methods, being transplanted into that country. The introduction of modern machinery into Russia would be of little use unless people capable of manipulating that machinery were also taken there. As a matter of fact the Bolsheviks are trying to do this by endeavouring to establish colonies of American skilled workers to operate up-to-date machinery, which the Bolsheviks know full well the Russians could not operate.

No doubt the Russian Government hopes to use these colonies as training grounds for native workers, but it will take more than a generation to produce even moderately skilled workers from among the Russians, and thus they will still be behind the Western workers in social development and understanding.

Mr. Mahoney does not state what he considers is "the S. P. G. B. standard," but it is as clear as daylight that social ownership of the means of life will not be established until a majority of the workers see the necessity for it by reaching an understanding of their slave position and the method necessary for their emancipation. Until then they will be content to remain slaves as long as an existence of some sort is allowed to them. Nay, more. They will be prepared to fight to defend the system that enslaves them. The passage from the preface to the "Critique" in no way conflicts with this position, and, therefore, does not call for any "interpretation" on the point.

Liebnicht's adventure was not a "revolution," and the attitude of the workers after his death showed how small was his following. The upheavals in Hungary, Persia, etc., were mere political struggles without the slightest effect upon the social structure of those countries.

The last query of our correspondent shows an astounding blindness to the events of the last eight years. Germany and Great

Britain were on the same capitalist basis, and practically at the same level of development, yet they engaged in a colossal war over questions of economic domination, and carried such war on for over four years. European capitalists have subsidised the buccaneering expeditions into Russia as one of the means to obtain control of Russia for the purpose of exploiting the Russian workers themselves.

J. F.

### WAS MARX RIGHT?

Dear comrade,

I have had one or two specimen copies of the *Socialist Standard* and have taken an interest in Marx, but having very little knowledge of the position I would be pleased if you would help me in the clearing up of a few points.

(1) Marx lays it down that Capital, as the system develops, becomes concentrated in fewer hands. Is it not a fact that instead of that being the case decentralisation of Capital is taking place on an ever larger and larger scale? And instead of the small man or middle class such as lawyers, doctors, etc., being eliminated they are becoming more numerous?

(2) Marx states that the workers condition under Capitalist must get worse, and that the worker must sink lower and lower in the social scale. Is it not true to say that for the last 30 years the workers condition instead of getting worse has been gradually improving. If these two statements are true, how do you reconcile them with the position of Marx? Should be much obliged if you would supply me with the answers to these questions. I am only seeking for information.

I am,

Yours fraternally,

C. F. BRANSBY.

### REPLY TO BRANSBY.

The student of Marx is often astonished at the emptiness of the supposed arguments advanced against the Marxist case. The questions given above are good specimens of these objections, as the following facts shew.

For several years there have been numerous agitations organised in America against the "Trusts," and various methods—all equally futile—have been proposed for

curbing these huge concentrations of wealth. At one period the capitalist press here claimed that such "Trusts" were purely American phenomena, and that they could not exist in "freedom loving Britain." Yet at the time such statements were made Trusts existed here in more than one industry. The Cotton Thread Trust, under the control of J. and P. Coats, and the Tobacco Trust were well known cases. The directors of the various Railway Companies used to meet periodically to arrange fares and rates and so forming a price-fixing ring.

The war increased the speed at which these combinations were formed, and in whatever direction one cares to look now combinations are seen in control. Lever Brothers, Ltd., is a gigantic Soap Trust and it is spreading into the Fish Industry. The armament firms form a big ring and control the battleship building yards. Over 80 per cent. of the banking business is controlled by five Banks, viz., Barclay's Bank, Lloyds Bank, London County Westminster and Parr's Bank, London Joint City and Midland Bank, National Provincial and Union Bank of England. (Wages, Prices and Profits, p. 101).

In 1919 the Government issued a report of a "Committee on Trusts" (Cd. 9,236, price 6d.), which states:—

"We find that there is at the present time in every important branch of industry in the United Kingdom an increasing tendency to the formation of Trade Associations and Combinations. . . ."

Some highly interesting information, with curious details, is given in this valuable report, that every critic of Marx should read.

In view of recent developments in the East it may be mentioned that practically the whole of the oil resources of the world is controlled by two immensely wealthy Trusts—The Standard Oil Co. and the Royal Dutch Shell Co.

There is some confusion of thought shewn in referring to lawyers, doctors, etc., as the "middle class." When Marx was dealing with the concentration of wealth, he referred to the small producer or capitalist being crushed out. The lawyers, doctors, and the whole of the professional section live by the sale of their services and are therefore, in the mass, members of the working class. They have increased in numbers due to the greater demand for

trained and technical advisers and managers in the industrial combinations and to the fact that so many small capitalists, seeing the hopelessness of their own position, have had their sons trained for the professions as they believe there is a greater chance of obtaining a livelihood in such directions.

In face of the huge array of facts around us to-day showing the misery of the worker's position, it is remarkable that anyone—not a defender of capitalism—can talk of the workers' position being "improved." The standard of life of the working class has been steadily deteriorating for more than 30 years. Even during the period of the war, when the workers opportunities of raising wages were greater than at any previous time under capitalism, the wages paid did not keep pace with the increasing cost of living. Since then wages have fallen heavily in all directions, far faster than the cost of living has decreased, so much so that in certain cases, e.g., the coal miners, many of those *in work* have to seek relief from the local Guardians.

But this is not the whole, nor even the main part of the case. First, relative to the amount of wealth produced, the social position of the worker has become much worse. In the middle of the 19th century the millionaire was looked upon as a wonder. To-day the billionaire excites no particular comment. While immense fortunes have been amassed in the hands of the few, the workers are struggling harder than ever to obtain a subsistence.

Second, whether the wages of a particular worker has increased or not the insecurity of his existence has grown by leaps and bounds. No one to-day is sure of his job, no matter how "high" or "low" his status may be. And it is this appalling insecurity of life amidst wealth produced in gigantic quantities that drives the workers down in the social scale as capitalism develops.

Every fact of the workers position demonstrates the correctness of Marx's great analysis of society, and the path society was bound to follow. J. F.

**Readers who find it difficult or impossible to obtain the SOCIALIST STANDARD through the usual channels should communicate with the Head Office, 17, Mount Pleasant, W.C.I., when regular delivery will be arranged.**

## AMERICAN RESOURCES.

"This Country (U.S.A.) alone has resources more than sufficient to feed, clothe, and shelter the entire population of all civilised countries. Probably it would not be too strong a statement to say that with our present man-power and material equipment, properly and effectively applied to our natural resources, we could furnish all the principal necessities for the economic support of all the people of the earth for years to come. It has been computed that we have standing room for all the human beings now living, in the State of Texas alone, giving to each individual 66 feet square of space. It has been estimated that California alone could furnish all necessities and many luxuries for one-half the present population of the United States. That section of the country usually referred to as the North-West could feed the present population of United States with the exception of such things as are grown in tropical countries, without any great strain upon its resources, and its surplus will be sufficient to purchase these products. Taken together with the Pacific North-West, it could furnish all the breadstuffs, meat products, dairy and poultry products, wool, flax, shoes, lumber, iron, steel, coal and water power, the entire country could use in the next five hundred years.

"The like could be said of almost any other great sub-division of the United States, yet there are millions in this country to-day who are facing a winter of threatened suffering from exposure and lack of food. At the same time, the farmers of the country have produced so great an excess of food that it cannot be carried over by our transportation, marketing, and credit system and placed in the hands of consumers, even though we have employment at prices within their reach. We have ample resources of coal and other fuel to meet all needs for industrial and domestic uses of our people and more; yet many parts of the country are facing the practical certainty of a fuel famine in case the winter should be severe."

(Senator E. F. LADD, reported in Congressional Record Sixty-Seventh Congress, Second Session, December 15th, 1921. Washington, U.S.A.).

## SOME I.L.P. DISTORTIONS OF MARX.

On page 5 of a pamphlet "All about the I.L.P." we read that the I.L.P. "has never formulated its theory of Socialism." In the I.L.P. study course "The Principles of Socialism," we have the theory which the I.L.P. says it had never formulated. If, however, you hastily conclude that its left hand is ignorant of what its right hand is doing you may be wrong. When you read further and learn that the basic principle of I.L.P. doctrine is "the belief that there is in the human soul as such, something precious," you realise that the denial is accurate; the I.L.P. has not formulated a theory of Socialism.

It is true that the I.L.P. has never systematised its propaganda and has been content to allow its members of various shades of political opinion to air their views as the spirit moved; but to suggest that there is some merit in this looseness is to ignore facts. What has actually happened is that the I.L.P. has been used in the main to spread the anti-socialist theories of the Liberal Party. It has, by emphasising those catch-phrases which expressed the earlier revolt of the rising industrial capitalists against the autocracy which hampered them, appealed to the discontent of the working class, without, however, assisting them to understand and solve the problems which faced them in their struggle.

The "Principles of Socialism" contains more positively harmful stuff than one would have thought possible for so slim a booklet, and we will therefore confine our attention to one piece of misrepresentation.

On page 24 we read:—

"... Karl Marx and his followers developed the theory of economic determination. In accordance with this, capitalist exploitation would proceed progressively with the consequent deterioration of the workers, until, at last, the extremity of their despair and a common consciousness of it would cause them to break their chains, which were all that they possessed, and seize possession of the, by then, completed construction of capitalist concentration. Both sides assumed the class war and the continuance of misery in its extreme form. Neither has proved true. There has been a slow amelioration in the condition of even the poorest; and a recognition that whereas Capitalism is based upon classes, Socialism cuts across them. The I.L.P. has always seen that though misery may make Socialists, social progress makes for Socialism, which represents a fulfilment and emancipation not for the proletariat only, but for workers of all grades, whether by hand or brain."

That is the considered opinion of Mary Agnes Hamilton, the mouthpiece of the I.L.P., and I propose to deal with it.

First for the condition of the workers: Mrs. Hamilton says there has been "slow amelioration." She gives no dates, but as concerns the last ten years I think it can be asserted with some confidence that there has been no such amelioration. There is hardly an industry the workers of which do not complain that the increased cost of living has left them poorer than in the years before the war, and with unemployment so widespread and the trade unions so demoralised, it cannot even be said that the future offers hope of their regaining what they have lost. I do know that in America, where statistics have been compiled, the standard of living in 15 chief industries has fallen 25 per cent. in 24 years ("American Economic Review," September, 1921), and that in this country in 1921, according to the "Daily Herald" (7th January, 1922), there were more people (1,519,823) in receipt of poor law relief than at any time during the 72 years for which record is available.

No proof of this amelioration is offered and I see no signs that it is taking place. Furthermore, Mrs. Hamilton has to convince not only me, but also her fellow member, R. C. Wallhead, who, as Chairman of the I.L.P., is reported to have spoken as follows at the Easter, 1922, Conference:—"The conditions of the workers go from bad to worse." . . . "There has been a reduction in wages of the working class of Britain of not less than 400 million pounds a year, and still the insatiable demand continues for more. In addition actual working conditions were again being attacked, and the workers would soon have in their program once more a renewed demand for the eight hour day." ("Daily Herald," 17th April).

So much for the facts.

Now for the theory. Since Mrs. Hamilton evidently assumes facts which will fit her arguments it is not at all surprising that she also invents theories which, with the assistance of her unreliable facts, she can make a pretence of disproving. One wonders though why Marx was introduced into the affair, unless it is because he is so much disliked in the I.L.P. and other Liberal circles in which Mrs. Hamilton moves.

She makes plain by her attempted refutation, her belief that the Marxian theory

which she purported to state, involved acceptance of the idea of increasing poverty for the workers. Let it be noted therefore that Marx did not formulate such a theory, and his explanation of the process of the breakdown of capitalism in no wise depended on a continued worsening of the condition of working class life.

Briefly put, this is the theory:—that there is a tendency to the concentration of the means of wealth production in fewer and fewer hands. That with the increase in powers of production owing to technical improvements, the mass of wealth produced becomes ever larger. That the growing use and higher quality of machinery render the workers ever more redundant, and prevent their obtaining much more than the bare necessities of life. That the share of wealth enjoyed by the workers stands therefore in ever decreasing proportion to the amount produced, with the consequent widening of the gulf which separates the working class from the capitalist class. As a result of these developments the workers, compelled to organise as a class in opposition to their exploiters, will ultimately recognise that their only hope lies in capturing political power in order to destroy the capitalist system of society.

Mrs. Hamilton alters this considerably; fakes her evidence and then triumphantly asserts that Marx and Engels were wrong! What she misunderstands, if, that is, she ever attempted to grasp the theory, is that Marx put the emphasis on the widening of the gulf between the working class and the capitalist class, the worsening of the workers' social status *relative* to that of the employing class, the increasing degree of the workers' exploitation. He expressly excludes the idea of increasing poverty by assuming the continuance of this process, whether wages are high or low.

"It follows therefore, that in proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the labourer, be his payment high or low, must grow worse." (Page 661; Capital, Vol. I., Swann, Sonnenschein), and again, "Just as little as better clothing, food, and treatment, and a larger peculium, do away with the exploitation of the slave, so little do they set aside that of the wage worker" (page 631).

As for the class struggle, Mrs. Hamilton says that the assumption of its continued existence "has proved untrue." Now she

may (although it is hardly credible) live in such seclusion as to be unaware of familiar evidence of the class struggle; that last year for instance, the miners were locked out and beaten, and that the engineers, who have recently been locked out, were promised all possible support by the I.L.P.; but she cannot be excused for having overlooked what she herself wrote. "The existing system is based on a competition between classes; of which the essential fact is the private ownership by one class of the means of production" (page 8) and on page 9 "So long as Capitalism lasts, no reconciliation of Labour and Capital is possible." The two participants in the struggle, the existence of which has "proved untrue," can never be reconciled!

As a matter of fact it is difficult to find any point on which Mrs. Hamilton is clear. Even her knowledge of the I.L.P. seems to be somewhat shadowy.

She goes on to make a distinction (which she does not attempt to define) between workers and proletarians. A proletarian in the Marxian use is just simply a wage or salary earner; a member of a propertyless class which, in order to live, must sell their energies to the owners of the means of production.

To encourage its members to use a word in any meaning they chose may be a way of giving effect to the I.L.P.'s belief in "Liberty of Conscience," but, even so, it would really be less confusing if this was explained.

Then again, "the I.L.P. has always seen that though misery may make Socialists, social progress makes for Socialism." Apparently the second part of the sentence represents the I.L.P.'s notion that social reforms are stepping stones to Socialism, although Mrs. Hamilton herself says "there must be a fundamental change" (page 8) and refers contemptuously to the social legislation of the last half century as "State grants in aid of wages" (page 14). It is implied that Marx also believed that mere wretchedness would make Socialists, which is again untrue. Does any sane person expect Socialists to be recruited from slums, workhouses and prisons, or from the dregs of society generally? If misery, in the sense accepted by Mrs. Hamilton, would make Socialists, how might we thank the capitalists for their share in causing the Volga famine.

The effects of the degradation imposed on the workers by the present system of society are such that there are many whose physical condition of life and whose opportunities of mental development sufficiently explain their failure to take an intelligent interest in their own welfare and that of their class. This explanation cannot be offered for more fortunately placed people like Mrs. Hamilton, and unless, therefore, she has deliberately misrepresented, she is guilty at least of inexcusable negligence.

H.

"The longing for knowledge has been the cause of speculative attempts to explain the phenomena of life and nature at a time when lack of experience and observation made inductive understanding impossible. Experience was then supplemented by speculation. In later times when experience had grown, previous speculation was generally recognised as erroneous. But it nevertheless requires thousands of years of repeated disappointments on one side and numerous brilliant successes of the inductive method on the other before these speculative hobbies came into disfavour."—JOSEPH DIETZGEN.—"Positive Outcome of Philosophy."

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Its production is a credit to the publishers.—neatly bound, well written, clear type, with a useful index—it deserves a wide circulation. Its price makes it possible for every Trade Union branch to purchase a copy, and a study of it should help workers to avoid many of those, apparently trivial mistakes and omissions which allow employers and Insurance Companies to escape observing the provisions of the law.

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R. BIRD.

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## SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain

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#### Sundays:

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Tooting Broadway, Garrett-lane, 11.30 a.m.  
Tottenham, West Green Corner, 7.30 p.m.  
Victoria Park, 3.30 p.m.  
Walthamstow, Hoe Street Station, 7.30 p.m.

#### Mondays:

Highbury Corner, 8 p.m.

#### Tuesdays:

Tooting, Church-lane, 8 p.m.

#### Thursdays:

Dalston, Queen's-road, 8.30 p.m.  
Tottenham, Junction Clyde-road and Phillip-lane, 8 p.m.

#### Saturdays:

Wood Green, Jolly Butcher's-hill, 8 p.m.

## THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

### OBJECT.

**The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.**

## Declaration of Principles.

### THE SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain

#### HOLDS—

That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

That as political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working-class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

The SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Those agreeing with the above principles and desiring enrolment in the Party should apply for membership form to secretary of nearest branch or at Head Office.